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ABSTRACT

In the Spring of 1973, The Vancouver School Board operated three projects funded by the Local Initiatives Program (LIP) of the Department of Immigration and Manpower. The projects were: Physical Education Assistant Program; One-to-One Tutoring Program; and Teacher Aids for Learning Assistance Centres. To assess the projects, questionnaires were sent to principals and teachers in schools where the LIP workers were placed. The questionnaire returns indicate that the paraprofessional assistance of the LIP workers was useful. While there were some criticisms of the training of the aids, and the organization of the projects, it is clear that the projects had the support of the principals and teachers concerned. The most convincing evidence of the projects' success was the overwhelming majority of principals and teachers who were in favor of permanent programs of aides in the schools. (Author/MLP)

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Evaluation of Projects in Vancouver Schools Funded by the Local Initiatives Program

July 1973

Susan Leslie

Research Report 73-11

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EVALUATION OF PROJECTS IN VANCOUVER SCHOOLS FUNDED BY THE LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

In the Spring of 1973, The Vancouver School Board operated three projects funded by the Local Initiatives Program of the Department of Immigration and Manpower. To assess the projects, questionnaires were sent to principals and teachers in schools where the L.I.P. workers were placed. The questionnaire returns indicate that the paraprofessional assistance of the L.I.P. workers was useful. While there were some criticisms of the training of the aides, and the organization of the projects, it is clear that the projects had the support of the principals and teachers concerned. The most convincing evidence of the projects' success was the overwhelming majority of principals and teachers who were in favour of permanent programs of aides in the schools.

EVALUATION OF PROJECTS IN VANCOUVER SCHOOLS FUNDED BY THE LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM

Introduction

The Department of Manpower and Immigration established two criteria for funding projects under the Local Initiatives Program. To qualify for L.I.P. monies, projects had to demonstrate that they would:

a) provide employment,
and
b) make a realistic and identifiable contribution to the quality of life.

Three projects proposed by the Vancouver School Board - Physical Education Assistant Program (PEAP), One-to-One Tutoring Program, and Teacher Aides for Learning Assistance Centres - were considered to meet these two criteria, and accordingly, were funded. In viewing the results of the projects, it is clear that they fulfilled the terms of their funding.

Employment was provided for 140 persons employed on the three projects at the highest employment period.

The fulfillment of the second criterion was determined by sending a questionnaire to principals and teachers in schools where L.I.P. workers were assigned. The questionnaire returns indicate how useful the project employees were, in the estimation of the people most directly involved with them. That the projects did indeed contribute to the quality of life is evident from the principals' and teachers' opinions of the usefulness of the L.I.P.-funded aides.

PROJECT # 1802: PHYSICAL EDUCATION ASSISTANT PROGRAM

The Physical Education Assistant Program (PEAP) was the smallest of the three Vancouver School Board projects. Seven workers were hired for placement in the elementary schools. Questionnaire returns from sixteen teachers reported on the work of all of the assistants.[1]

One of the aims of PEAP was to provide supervision for Physical Education classes, thereby freeing the regular P.E. instructor to work intensively with individual children. In the opinion of eleven of the instructors, the program succeeded in this aim. The assistants assumed other duties as well, such as setting up equipment and supervising outdoor P.E. activities. Some primary teachers enlisted the assistant's help in the gross motor program. The PEAP workers were not exclusively concerned with P.E. activities: in a few schools, they assisted in library work, and with structured reading programs.

The PEAP workers were also intended to provide extra help for intramural programs at lunch hour and after school. Six of the seven workers were actively involved in the intramural program at their schools, coaching teams and supervising activities. One of the workers went camping for a weekend with the students, and accompanied them cycling and cross-country running.

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[1] In all, nine workers were hired, two of which were replacement staff.

Twelve of the teachers considered the assistants adequately trained. However, two commented that some pre-service training in primary school physical education would have been very helpful. One teacher complained that training the assistant in class was too time-consuming.

All of the teachers were in favour of a continued Physical Education Assistant Program, but five felt that any permanent program should provide more extensive training for the assistants.

Apart from this problem of adequate training, there were few dissatisfactions. One teacher felt that the program could have been better organized. Another suggested that teachers should decide on the placement and responsibilities of the L.I.P.-funded workers.

All seven principals who responded felt that the program had been useful, and all wanted the program continued.

From the questionnaire returns, it is evident that the PEAP project was successful. It accomplished both of its chief aims: freeing the regular P.E. instructor for remedial work, and providing extra staffing for the intramural program.

PROJECT # 1801: TEACHER AIDES FOR LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTRES (TALAC)

From experience with three pilot projects in 1971, the Vancouver School Board felt that full-time aides were essential to the operation of the Learning Assistance Centres (LACs). The pilot projects demonstrated that a full-time aide to produce the manipulative material required in the centre and to assume instructional duties under supervision, would enable the LAC teacher to work more effectively with the many children who need learning assistance.

Project TALAC hired sixty aides. Questionnaire returns from sixty teachers reported on fifty-nine aides.[1] The returns confirmed the need for aides: forty-seven of the teachers responded that they felt the aides had been "extremely useful".

In most cases (twenty-eight) the aides' work consisted both of support tasks - such as preparing materials, marking from keys, setting up the classroom - and of instructional tasks, under the guidance of the LAC teacher. Some workers who were qualified teachers assumed responsibility for teaching part of the LAC program. Others with secretarial experience worked exclusively on support tasks. In two schools without LACs, the aides were assigned to the Library Resource Centre.

Under the terms of the project proposal, the teachers in the Learning Assistance Centres were to train the aides. In the estimation of the majority of the teachers (forty-two) the aides were adequately prepared for their job: they were energetic, capable, and willing to learn. However, several of the teachers commented that the aides should have had more specific training prior to placement in the LAC. They felt that training the aides in the centres was too time-consuming in view of the short term of their employment.

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[1] Not all of the aides held their positions for the full term of the project. By April 27, there were 59 employees on the project. The returns thus cover more than three-quarters of the workers.

Fifty of the sixty teachers would like to see a permanent program of teacher aides for the Learning Assistance Centres. However, their comments on the questionnaire revealed certain dissatisfactions with the existing program. It was felt by many that the aides needed more training. One suggested using Special Education interns to resolve this problem. Three teachers wanted the distinction between professional and non-professional work clarified, so that the limits of the aides' legitimate responsibilities would be understood. Two teachers wanted to select their own aides. One felt that too many of the aides were using L.I.P. employment as a stop-gap, and were not genuinely interested in their work. But overriding these objections were the comments of the twenty-four teachers who felt that the aides were essential for the optimum use of the LAC. As two noted, paid aides are more dependable than volunteers and can be more readily integrated into the daily program of the LAC.

The principals were equally positive in their assessment of the TALAC program. All were in favour of hiring permanent teacher aides. Forty-two felt that the aides' work had been "extremely useful"; the remaining nine assessed it as "useful". Their reservations about the program echoed the teachers' comments. They mentioned the need for defining the aides' role, and for screening the applicants more effectively. They, too, felt that the aides needed more training.

In summary, it is clear that the L.I.P.-funded aides who worked in the Learning Assistance Centres were very useful additions to the staff. With few exceptions, the teachers and principals polled would like to see a permanent program of aides in the LACs. Their objections to the present program can be attributed more to the temporary nature of the L.I.P. funding, than to the program itself. With permanent funding and the organizational time that such funding would allow, the problems noted by the teachers and principals could largely be overcome.

PROJECT # 1803: ONE-TO-ONE

The tutoring program, Project One-to-One, employed seventy-three tutors (as of April 27, 1973). Questionnaires were returned by sixty-nine teachers, who reported on forty-eight One-to-One workers.

The workers were placed in a variety of situations throughout the Vancouver school system. One-to-One tutors in elementary schools worked in open area and self-contained classrooms; some worked in Special Classes with New Canadians and aphasic children. Tutors in the secondary schools taught a diverse range of subjects, from electronics to remedial reading to modern languages. One tutor worked with the school counsellor, doing school-home liaison work. Most tutored fewer than ten students, carrying on a structured program in specific subjects. But many worked wherever they were needed in the school.

In the opinion of forty-seven of the teachers who replied, the tutors' work helped "a great deal"; eleven said it helped "a little", and a further eleven said that the impact of the tutor was "difficult to assess at this time".

On the question of tutors' training, most of the teachers (forty-five) felt the One-to-One workers were qualified for their work. Several who were hired had teaching experience or training in education and all of the One-to-One workers were given some training by the Vancouver School Board prior to placement in the schools.

Eight of the teachers said that they had trained the tutor assigned to their classes; three of these stated quite emphatically that it must be solely the teacher's responsibility to train and supervise the tutor.

The relationship between the professional teacher and the non-professional aide was the source of many reservations teachers expressed about the program. When asked if they were in favour of a permanent tutoring program, seven of the teachers who replied "Yes" qualified that answer by stating that the area of non-professional duties must be clearly defined beforehand. The objections raised by the B.C. Teachers' Federation to the use of non-professionals in teaching roles were shared by many of the teachers who responded. Five felt that only qualified teachers should be hired. A few expressed the fear that hiring low-paid tutors for such programs would delay the hiring of fully-qualified - and more expensive -teachers who are needed to reduce the average class size. However, the majority of teachers (forty-six) were unconditionally in support of a permanent tutoring program.

Thirty-two of the thirty-three principals who responded supported a permanent tutoring program. The one dissenter felt that the objectives should be made more specific and the workers better trained before any permanent program could be considered. However, all felt the program had been useful; fully twenty-two deemed it "extremely useful". When asked to comment on the subjects in which the tutors had been most effective, the majority mentioned the "core" subjects, such as mathematics and laguage arts. The original One-to-One proposal isolated "basic skills in language and arithmetic" as the specific concerns of the tutoring program. Thus the response of the principals may simply reflect the placement of the majority of the tutors: i.e. they were most effective where they were most active. But they were also most effective where they were most needed, for, as was recognized in the original project design, successful tutoring in core subjects can affect achievement in other areas of the curriculum.

The comments of the teachers indicated the usefulness of tutors in running a more flexible, individualized program. But they also indicated some dissatisfaction with the organization of Project One-to-One: there were complaints about the selection and training of the employees, and, as mentioned above, there was confusion about the definition of the aides' non-professional role. Despite these objections, there was agreement on the value of tutors at all levels in the school system. It is to be hoped that any future tutoring program can resolve the problems encountered in Project One-to-One.

PRINCIPALS' COMMENTS:

The format of the principals' questionnaire allowed them to comment generally on all of the L.I.P. projects in the Vancouver Schools. Their general comments are very similar to the teachers' comments on specific projects: the same complaints and compliments appear.

By far the greatest number of comments (thirty-five of fifty-six) were positive. Twelve of the principals praised the individual project workers they dealt with. Another eighteen said that the projects had demonstrated the usefulness of para-professionals.

However, their satisfaction with the L.I.P. projects was tempered by some concern with organizational problems. The conflict with the B.C. Teachers' Federation over the role of non-professionals was cited by three principals as a problem that should be dealt with before any permanent programs are established. Several (eleven) felt that workers should be better screened and better trained before arriving in the schools. But it is clear that if such problems can be resolved, the L.I.P. projects, or similar paraprofessional programs, will have the approval and support of the school principals.

CONCLUSION:

It is clear from the questionnaire returns that all three L.I.P. projects sponsored by the Vancouver School Board made a "realistic and identifiable contribution to the quality of life". Their contribution has been two-fold. The project workers have been useful to principals and teachers in assisting with support tasks, and in reducing the pupil-to-adult ratio in the schools. The projects have also been of unquestioned benefit to the entire community, by providing training and worthwhile employment to more than a hundred and forty adults.

The criticisms encountered in the questionnaires have centred on three issues: the selection of aides, their training, and their role in the classroom. The temporary nature of L.I.P. funding has made the problems of selection and training - which plague any paraprofessional program - all the more acute. To make maximum use of the Local Initiatives grant, employees must be hired and be placed in the field in a matter of days. Permanent funding would allow more organizational time, which could improve the process of hiring and preparing the aides. It could also permit administrators to confer with the Teachers' Federation, and to define clearly, in advance, the role of the non-professional in the classroom.

As the experience of other school systems with paraprofessional programs has shown[1], preparing teachers to work with aides is crucial to the program's success. Program organizers should instruct teachers in the effective use of aides. In return, teachers should assist in planning pre-service training, and in defining the role of the non-professional. Such consultation would ensure that aides were useful and welcome members of the school staff.

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[1] Arth, Alfred A., Wagoner, Jennings L., and Groden, Austin F., "The Teacher Aides: The Preparation and Utilization of Paraprofessionals", Curry Memorial School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1971.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Questionnaire Returns from
Teachers Working with LIP Employees

Project PEAP
Project TALAC
Project One-to-One

Evaluation of the LIP Personnel in the Physical Education Assistant Program

Questionnaire for Teachers
(Responses from 16 Teachers re 7 Workers)

1. How do you use the PEAP worker in your school?

Aids P.E. teacher - 12

Coaches Teams - 3

After school and lunch supervision - 6

Non P.E. Tasks - 3

No response - 1

Gross Motor Work - 3

Note: Many teachers reported several uses.

2. Has the PEAP worker been (check one)

extremely useful 9
useful 7
not useful

3. Has the presence of a Physical Education Assistant enabled you to work more intensively with certain children?

YES 11

A Little 2

NO 3

4. What role has the PEAP worker had in the intra-mural program at lunchtime and after school?

Sport Supervision 6

No Role 1

5. Do you feel the PEAP worker was adequately trained for his/her job?

YES 12

No response 1

NO 2

Trained by Teacher 1

Evaluation of LIP Personnel in the Teacher Aides for Learning Assistance Centres Program

Questionnaire for Teachers

(59 Teachers and 59 Aides)

1. How have you used the LIP-funded Teacher aide in the Learning Assistance Centre?

Support Work	- 4	Library Work	- 2
Instruction under Supervision	- 13	Gross Motor Program	- 1
Support and Instruction	- 28	No response	- 9
Varied Remedial Work (No LAC)	- 1	Office Work	- 1

2. Do you feel that the teacher aide has been (check one)

extremely useful 47
useful 11
not useful ____
No response 1

3. Do you feel that the aide was adequately prepared for his/her job?

YES	36	Trained by Teacher	7
NO	7		
No response	2	Prepared because of Personal Qualities	7

4. Would you like to see a permanent teacher aide program established for the Learning Assistance Centre?

YES	50	Conditional Yes	4
NO	3	Don't Know	1
No response	1		

Please feel free to comment here on any aspect of the Teacher Aides for Learning Assistance Centres Program

Aides are essential for the effective operation of LAC 24
Aides need more training 6
Aides were excellent 4
Conflict over professional and non-professional work should be resolved 3
Paid aides more useful than volunteers 2
It would be valuable to have the same aide for a longer period of time 1
Aides should be better screened 3

Evaluation of LIP Personnel in Project One-to-One

Questionnaire for Teachers
(69 Teachers and 48 Aides)

1. What is your subject area?

Secondary			Elementary	
English - 7	Rem. Reading-3	Art - 1	1 - 3 19	Intermediate O.A.3
Math - 4	Electronics- 1	New Can. - 2	K - 7 5	Gr. 5 - 1
Sciences- 2	Library - 1	Counselling - 1	Reading 1	Spec.Cl. 1
Languages-3	Social St. - 1		Intermediate 3R's 10	LAC - 3

2. How many students are receiving tutoring in this subject through Project One-to-One?

1 - 10: 22 — Working where needed - 11

11 - 21: 13 — No Response - 1

21 - 30: 6

3. Do you feel that the work of the Project One-to-One tutor has helped the students concerned?

(a) it has helped a great deal 47
(b) it has helped a little 11
(c) it hasn't helped at all
(d) it is difficult to assess at this time 11

4. Do you feel that the tutor was adequately prepared for his/her work?

YES - 45		NO	5
Don't Know - 2		Trained by Teacher	8
No response- 2		Personal Qualities	7

5. Would you like to see this or a similar tutoring program established on a permanent basis?

YES	46	NO	1	No response	4
Conditional Yes	17	Don't Know	1		

Please feel free to comment (on the other side) on any aspect of Project One-to-One.

Tutor was Excellent - 6
Workers need more training - 5
Distinction between Professional and Non-Professional work should have been made clear - 12
Tutor's help permits more flexible classroom - 3
Trained teachers should be hired - 3
Tutor must work under guidance of teacher - 2
Program was ill-planned - 2

6. Would you like to see a permanent program of Physical Education Assistants established in the elementary schools?

YES 9 No response 1

Conditional Yes 6 (For 5 of the 6, the condition imposed was "better training")

Please feel free to comment here on any aspect of the PEAP program.

Aides need more training 4

Teachers should decide placement and use 1

Aides were very competent, resourceful etc. 2

Training aides in class is time-consuming 1

Program should be better organized 1

APPENDIX B

Summary of Questionnaire Returns from
Principals Working with LIP Employees

Evaluation of LIP-funded Projects in Vancouver Schools

Questionnaire for Principals

Please answer the applicable questions:

A. If there are Physical Education Assistant Project (PEAP) workers in your school: (N = 7)

1. What kind of work are they doing?

(See Teachers' Questionnaire)

2. Do you feel their work has been (check one)

extremely useful 2
useful 5
not useful _____

3. Would you like this program continued?

YES - 6

Conditional Yes - 1

B. If there are LIP-funded Teacher Aides in the Learning Assistance Centre in your school: (N = 51)

1. What kind of work are they doing?

(See Teachers' Questionnaire)

2. Do you feel their work has been (check one)

extremely useful 42
useful 9
not useful _____

3. Would you like to have permanent Teacher's Aides in the Learning Assistance Centre?

YES 49 NO

Conditional Yes 2

C. If there are Project One-to-One workers in your school: (N = 33)

1. What subjects are One-to-One workers tutoring?

(See Teachers' Questionnaire)

2. Have you found One-to-One workers (check one)

extremely useful 24
useful 8
not useful 1

3. If they have been useful, in what subjects have they been most useful?

Reading and Language Arts - 18

Math - 14

English for New Canadians - 3

French - 2

4. Would you like to see this or a similar tutoring program continued on some permanent basis?

YES - 31 NO - 1

YES, on condition - 1

D. Please feel free to comment here on any aspect of the LIP projects.

Aides are useful and needed - 18

Aides were excellent - 12

Aides need more training - 3

Better screening needed - 7

Program should be cleared with BCTF - 3

Aides must work under direction of teacher - 2

Staff were supportive of program - 2

Program was hastily organized - 3